CIA Reportedly Contracted With Hughes in Effort to Raise Sunken Soviet A-Sub

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Howard Hughes contracted with the Central Intelligence Agency to raise a sunken Russian nuclear submarine from the Atlantic Ocean, according to reports circulating among local law enforcement officers.

The operation reportedly was carried out—or at least attempted—by the crew of a marine mining vessel owned by Hughes' Summa Corp. and [illegible] in supersecrecy by a Los Angeles firm.

The head of the latter firm denied any knowledge of such an operation.

Confidential files on the operation [illegible] to have been among the [illegible] stolen by [illegible] safecrackers [illegible] Hollywood offices at [illegible] last June 5.

The thieves made an offer to return the sensitive documents, but the price tag initially was $1 million. The amount was negotiated downward over the subsequent months but the talks were broken off several weeks ago.

In the aftermath of the unsuccessful negotiations, it was decided by authorities to take the case before the Los Angeles County Grand Jury.

The ship involved is the Long [illegible] Glomar Explorer, the [illegible] advanced marine mining vessel in the world, even though it is still in the experimental stage.

It was designed and is operated for [illegible] Global Marine [illegible] which has offices in downtown Los Angeles and Century City.

Global Marine Board Chairman R. F. Bauer denied Friday any knowledge of the reported sub raising.

Paul Reeve, general manager of Summa's ocean mining division, said the Glomar Explorer, commissioned last year, made no attempt to raise a sunken submarine.

He conceded, however, that it made a 10-day shakedown cruise in the Atlantic but spent the time just off the East Coast "near the mouth of the Delaware River."

Three days of hearings have been scheduled by the grand jury, beginning Tuesday.

Two of the key witnesses called to testify are Nadine Hensley, a longtime secretary to Hughes and presently a senior vice president for Summa Corp., and Lou Gordon, described by investigators as "being involved with the movie industry."

Miss Hensley, reportedly one of the few persons to see Hughes face-to-face in recent years, will be asked to tell the grand jury what was taken in the burglary.

Gordon is scheduled to explain his role as an intermediary between authorities and a man named Donald Woolbright, whom investigators accuse of demanding the huge sums for return of the stolen items.

It reportedly was Woolbright who [illegible] one of the stolen documents [illegible] revealed the Hughes' organization's involvement in the sub[illegible] at the request of the CIA.

[illegible] submarine-raising operation was indeed carried out, it is likely to have involved one of two Soviet undersea vessels:

—A nuclear-powered attack submarine of the Soviet November-class which the Pentagon believes sank off Spain in April, 1970.

—Another nuclear submarine which foundered in March, 1972, about 900 miles northeast of Newfoundland and which may have sunk. This submarine was equipped to carry three nuclear missiles.

A spokesman for the FBI said in Washington he could neither confirm nor deny a report that FBI Director Clarence Kelley had conferred with officials in Los Angeles about possible national security aspects of the case.

The spokesman said that the information he had was that the FBI became involved in the case because it involved an allegation of possible interstate transportation of stolen property, a federal offense.

The local investigation is being conducted jointly by the district attorney's office and the Los Angeles Police Department but neither Dist. Atty. Joseph Busch nor Police Chief Edward M. Davis would comment.

At the time of the robbery, Summa officials reported to police that $60,000 in cash was taken but did not detail which files might be missing.

Sources close to the investigation said that Summa officials may have realized for the first time that several sensitive files had been taken when the ransom demand for their return [illegible]

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